

Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Advisory Board Application for Funding

Applicant: Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

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Proposal Title: Upper Columbia River ESA Biologist

Type of Proposal: Partial funding (40%) of position to fulfill permitting requirements for fisheries in the upper Columbia River and tributaries (generally between Priest Rapids to Chief Joseph dams) and technical assistance to administer the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program (CRSSE).

Date of submission: CRSSRAB mtg February 25, 2016

Effective Period of Funding: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017 (FY 2017)

Amount of Funding Requested: \$ 40,568

Activity to be funded:

This request would cover up to 40% of the salary and benefits for the upper Columbia River ESA biologist position, and some travel and goods and services especially as these relate to the administration of the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program.

Status Summary: **This is a renewal of a proposal approved the last six years.** The funding has been fairly static, but increased this year due to agency wide salary increases.

Background: The upper Columbia River ESA biologist position in Region 2 fulfills two functions. This position develops and evaluates recreational fisheries related to hatchery programs while ensuring ESA listed species are adequately protected. It serves as the Agency's mid-Col ESA biologist, as such, develops and submits reports for all applicable Section 10 (NMFS) and 6 (USFWS) permits associated with hatchery programs, research, monitoring and evaluation programs and fisheries. The position also provides VSP and harvest parameters to for Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead forecasts (USvOR TAC support).

This position also serves as the Agency Lead on three long term multi-Agency technical committees related to hydroelectric mitigation and the resulting salmon and steelhead

hatchery programs in the Upper- and Mid-Columbia Basin. The position oversees, evaluates, and makes recommendations and decisions regarding the implementation of negotiated mitigation agreements while being mindful of the political and social impacts of the management alternatives of state, national, and international significance (WA, US Dept of Interior, Tribal entities). Mitigation includes hatchery programs, research projects, and monitoring and evaluation programs, which provide management solutions to preserve, protect, perpetuate and enhance the resources. The position ensures hatchery mitigation program agreements are implemented as agreed or develops alternatives that seek to maximize the benefit to the resource and/or public.

The upper Columbia River ESA biologist position's responsibilities for conservation and recreational fisheries related to hatchery programs while ensuring ESA listed species are adequately protected were previously covered by State funding (WDFW Fish Program ESA Response Unit). Contracts with Grant, Chelan, and Douglas PUDs funded the work on the technical committees related to hydroelectric mitigation and the resulting salmon and steelhead hatchery programs in the Upper- and Mid-Columbia Basin.

In 2009, the upper Columbia River ESA biologist position was vacated. Due to fiscal difficulties, a statewide hiring freeze was instigated shortly thereafter. WDFW managed severe budget cuts in part through vacancy management, and state funding was withdrawn from this position. The remaining local contract funding was inappropriate to cover the ESA related fisheries responsibilities inherent to the position. These former ESA related fisheries responsibilities were deemed appropriate for funding within the intent of the legislation creating the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program. In addition, it was recognized that the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program would require a basin-wide technical lead (tracking funding recommendations, and oversight for data/records management and meeting preparation, agendas), and these responsibilities were also added to the position. Up to 40% of salary and benefits of the upper Columbia River ESA biologist position have been covered by CRSSE since May 2010 (~FY 2011).

Proposed Activity: This position develops and submits reports for all applicable permits associated with fisheries having ESA impacts in the upper Columbia River. The year around presence of either spring Chinook and/or steelhead, both listed species, in the upper Columbia River require permitting for almost all fisheries in the mainstem and tributaries.

The upper Columbia River ESA biologist position is responsible for six of the ten Section 10 (NMFS) permits currently held by WDFW. These permits cover fisheries for listed steelhead and unlisted summer Chinook, sockeye, rainbow and cutthroat trout, and spring Chinook (Carson stock) in the presence of listed species. Of the remaining permits, one is on the Snake River, and three are non-Columbia River Basin permits.

Many of these Section 10 permits either expire in 2013 or are under review due new understanding of the influence of hatchery programs on natural origin components of the populations. As the new HGMPs for listed spring Chinook and steelhead programs in the

Wenatchee and Methow basins are implemented, many new permits associated with conservation fisheries will be necessary. Currently, Section 10 permits necessary for the spring Chinook and steelhead programs in the Wenatchee Basin have been retained, and permits for the same in the Methow basin are under review and negotiation. In addition, DFW greatly assists with the Section 7 consultation between NOAA and USFWS.

The Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program requires oversight and technical assistance in administrative tasks such as tracking revenue and expenditures, funding recommendations, data/records management, Fish Program and Board communication, and meeting preparation. While initially estimated to require up to one month of time, these responsibilities have proved to require considerably more time than anticipated (also see 2014 proposal for the Upper Columbia River Salmon Recovery Coordinator position). Provided the Board approves additional administrative assistance, the Upper Columbia River ESA Biologist position would retain oversight and CRSSRAB point contact for continuity.

Assistance Required:

WDFW requests funding for up to 40% of the salary and benefits for the upper Columbia River ESA biologist position, and some travel and goods and services especially as these relate to the administration of the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program.

Budget Summary:

Fish & Wildlife Biologist 4 (40%)

Salaries and Benefits = \$7,809/month

FY2017, July-June; 12 months x 0.40

\$ 37,483

Goods and Services

Vehicle lease (\$325/month, 5 months)

\$1,625

-includes 500 miles/month, fuel, and maintenance

Vehicle operation (\$0.46/additional mile – 1,000 miles)

\$460

Goods and Services (computer, phone, etc ~200/mo)

\$1,000

CRSSRAB Funding Request :

\$ 40,568

Need for Proposed Activity: Funding for continued development and oversight for all applicable permits associated with fisheries having ESA impacts in the upper Columbia River. The year around presence of either spring Chinook and/or steelhead, both listed species, in the upper Columbia River require permitting for almost all fisheries in the mainstem and tributaries. Continued oversight is needed for the Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program.

Benefit of Proposed Activity: Existing fisheries will be maintained through meeting the requirements of existing permit requirements. Potential new fisheries will be

promulgated through successful vetting of management plans and obtaining new permits. Recovery actions will be enhanced through implementation of adult management including fisheries. Public confidence and participation in recovery efforts will be enhanced through realized recreational and economic benefits derived from local fisheries.

Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Program administrative tasks such as tracking funding recommendations, data/records management, and meeting preparation will be completed in an efficient and timely manner.